

Accessibility Through Assistive Technology



Assistive technology takes the form of electronics, computer programs, or other mechanical devices that are used, often in conjunction with regular equipment, to assist a person with special needs in doing specific tasks. Assistive technology helps individuals with disabilities conduct everyday tasks needed to increase independence and enhance their quality of life.

Some of the most common assistive technology terms are explained below.

Assistive Technology Glossary

- **Alternative keyboards**, also called ergonomic keyboards, conform to the shape and movements of the wrist and hands and reduce repetitive motion.
- **Alternative pointing devices** include trackballs, ergonomically designed mice and touch-pads, which provide better positioning and require less motion on the user's part for those who cannot use a standard mouse.
- **Assistive listening devices** make conference rooms and auditoriums accessible for hard-of-hearing individuals and assist with communication and cognition.
- **Braille displays** provide Braille output from the computer screen one line at a time and are used in conjunction with screen readers.
- **Braille embossers** produce Braille hard copy output from a computer.
- **Scanner/readers** convert typewritten or typeset material into clearly spoken synthesized speech.
- **Screen reading software** operates a speech synthesizer, which audibly voices the content of a computer screen.
- **Word prediction software** suggests words based on terms recently typed and the frequency of word usage by the typist. It is used by people with a variety of special needs.
- **Augmentative communication devices** use bright, colorful symbols to communicate using digitized text-to-speech capabilities and provide a virtually unlimited vocabulary.
- **Voice amplifiers** enable users to make their voices louder so others can understand their speech.
- **Teletypewriters or TTYs** are used in conjunction with telephones to print the words spoken by the other party when calling someone with a hearing impairment.
- **Screen magnification software** enlarges the size of type and images on a screen automatically to make it easier for a person with vision impairments to see.



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